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25 September 1973

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Some Reactions to the National Intelligence Daily

1. I took three sample copies of this publication to the EOB last week to elicit some reactions from NSC Staffers.
2. Hal Sonnenfeldt was negative. He thought it would be very difficult to educate readers away from the skeptical presumptions with which they approach newspapers. When I counseled that most Americans were used to taking in information via this format, his answer was that they are used to receiving a badly organized and unreliable data in this format. He went on to say that government officials are used to receiving serious and reliable information in the form of government documents. Twenty minutes of discussion about the flexibility and advantages of the newspaper format did not alter Hal's reaction.
3. Andy Marshall was favorable. He seemed to appreciate the newspaper as a sign of innovation. He thought it would be all right to absorb into the newspaper the specialized regional publications in which he has had a strong interest. He was not much concerned with the problem that bothered Sonnenfeldt. He hoped that the capacity available in a newspaper would encourage us to present competing lines of analysis.
4. Andy called me a couple of days later to express a concern which had occurred to him on further reflection. He was worried lest the need to fill up all that space would lead to more reportage at the expense of analysis. I told him that we too were concerned about this and would be mindful of this tendency. Andy did not want this reservation to cancel out his generally favorable reaction.
5. Larry Eagleburger was tied up in drafting Kissinger's UN speech and I did not get to see him.

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Deputy Director of Current Intelligence

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION


SUBJECT: NSC Staff Reaction to the NID Proposal

Yesterday I talked for over an hour with Hal Saunders, the NSC senior staffer for Middle East and South Asia, and two of his assistants, Hank Appelbaum and Rosemary Niehuss. I displayed the sample copies of the NID, explained the origin of the proposal and what we hoped to accomplish with it, and solicited their ideas.

Their reactions were essentially negative. Saunders initially said that the quality of the product rather than the format of the publications is the problem he is interested in; he subsequently went on to indicate that he does not really see a high-level reader finding this medium very useful or attractive. He cited the fact that the President reads only page-size summaries of press and other items. Saunders also expressed the feeling, which we have heard before, that the newspaper format diminishes the credibility of our reportage because of the association in the reader's mind with the commercial press.

The concerns of the junior staffers centered on the part of our proposal that calls for the NID to replace the present variety of current intelligence publications they receive. They were not entirely reassured by the idea that the Red CIB, fortified with significant matter now only in the Black version, would continue to be available. I also held out the prospect of a Middle East/Africa and other divisional publications which we could tailor to the needs of special customers such as the NSC staff.

The juniors too professed to be turned off by the newspaper format, although they were willing to admit that it might be convenient for a high-level scanner. They urged us to try something like the present CIWR which they regard as a superior publication, as a daily.


Chief, Middle East Africa Division, OCI

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25 September 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Office of Current Intelligence

SUBJECT : NSC Staff Comments on OCI Newspaper

1. On 24 September I briefed Bill Jorden, Senior NSC Staff Officer for Latin America, on the National Intelligence Daily and showed him the sample copies. His reaction was mixed, but somewhat more positive than negative.

2. Bill expressed misgivings about the adjustment that readers would have to make to receiving their intelligence in newspaper form and expressed concern about security aspects. He noted, for example, that anyone like himself who talks frequently with newsmen and foreign diplomats has trouble keeping track of where he learned certain bit of information. His system is to recall the format of the report he read, i.e., in his mind's eye he sees either a paragraph in "official" form (as in a cable or CIB item) or a news column, the latter signifying to him that the information is in the public domain. He would have to restrain himself if he were reading the Daily daily. He was also concerned that some people might make assumptions about this newspaper, particularly if not properly briefed, that they commonly make about newspapers in general, e.g., that the information is not as reliable as official reporting or that the stories are subject to interpretive bias.

3. Nonetheless, Bill recognized the advantages of the more flexible and timely format and said he was "intrigued" by the approach. In discussing his initial reservations, he suggested that he might be more conditioned by past experience to expect traditional forms than he should be. In any case, he thought the new venture was worth a try.



Chief

Western Hemisphere Division

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